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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2009

In Today's Papers

"Erdogan's Davos Walkout Raises Armenian Hopes for April 24"
(Hurriyet)

Media outlets report AKP lawmakers Suat Kiniklioglu and Cuneyt Yuksel as well as MHP's Mithat Melen returned home yesterday from a trip to the US. While there they held meetings on Turkey-Israel ties in light of the Erdogan-Peres row in Davos and a prospective Armenian genocide resolution in the US Congress. In "Erdogan's Davos Walkout Raises Armenian Hopes for April 24," mainstream Hurriyet reports the lawmakers said they told the Jewish community in the US that Prime Minister Erdogan's criticism in Davos was not directed at Jewish society or the Israeli state, but to the existing Israeli administration. "We also told the Jewish groups about the normalization trend in Turkey-Armenia ties, warning them that adoption of the AGR would waste an historic opportunity," said Kiniklioglu.

President Gul in Moscow

Media outlets report President Abdullah Gul flew to Moscow yesterday for a four-day state visit. Gul is accompanied by a delegation of 150 cabinet ministers and businessmen. Gul said while in Russia, he would meet with President Medvedev and Prime Minister Putin to discuss "recent developments in our geography." Papers expect the two sides to discuss the Blue Stream II pipeline, the first nuclear power plant to be built in Turkey, and the problem of Turkish trucks being delayed at Russian border crossings.

TGS Rejects Ex-Police Chief's Allegations

Media outlets report that in a statement released Thursday, the Turkish General Staff (TGS) rejected allegations coming from former police special operations chief Ibrahim Sahin, who claimed at hearings in the 'Ergenekon' court case that TGS Information Office head Brigadier General Metin Gurak told him to command a new anti-terror task force to be composed of 150-300 policemen and military officers. "It is ridiculous that an army of 700,000 personnel would be in need of a 300-member illegal organization," said the TGS, adding, "The Turkish military has no connections with illegal organizations or criminals." In the statement, the TGS expressed concern that Sahin's testimony had been given in court

about a month ago, but was now published again on February 11 "in a newspaper," implying the daily Radikal.

TUSIAD Sees 'Serious Progress' in IMF-Turkey Talks

Media outlets report Turkey's business organization TUSIAD paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Erdogan on Thursday. TUSIAD chair Arzuhan Dogan Yalcindag said after the meeting there had been "significant progress" in Turkish talks with the IMF. "Our proposals are parallel but we need to make more progress," Yalcindag added. Islamist-oriented Zaman comments the PM "comforted" the delegation which wants an agreement with the IMF urgently.

Kurdish Party MP Wants 'Tunceli' Renamed 'Dersim'

Papers report Serafettin Halis, a pro-Kurdish lawmaker from the eastern province of Tunceli, submitted a proposal to the parliament, asking his province's name be changed to 'Dersim.' Halis said the Tunceli name was a symbol of assimilation efforts in the region. "The trauma caused by the forced migration in 1937-1938 continues; returning to the original name, Dersim, will alleviate the trauma," he said. Justice Minister Mehmet Ali Sahin reacted yesterday by calling Halis' proposal a "separatist move," saying renaming Tunceli was an attempt to destroy Turkey's unity. Dersim province was established in the Tanzimat period during the decline of the Ottoman Empire. In 1935, it was renamed "Tunceli" as part of an effort to "Turkify" local names. Today, it has a population of 84,000 and is mostly populated by Kurdish Alevis.

ASALA Threatens Gakavian for Apology Campaign from Turks

Hurriyet, Radikal and Cumhuriyet report Dr. Armen Gakavian of Sydney's Macquarie University received "death threats" from the

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Armenian terror organization ASALA after his attempt to launch a Armenian apology campaign to apologize to Turks for murders committed by Armenian gangs in the early 1900s as well as ASALA attacks on Turks and Turkey's interests. Papers cite the Armenian daily Azg reporting that Gakavian sent a retraction to Armenian media, saying his approach was 'distorted' and that he hadn't apologized in any way.

Editorials on Turkey-Russia; US Foreign Policy Based on 'Smart Power'

Erol Manisali writes in the leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet: "Turkey and Russia have joint interests in the Black Sea and the Caucasus as well as overlapping demands on the Istanbul-based Greek Orthodox Patriarchate. Turkey's need for natural gas and the Russian market is indispensable for our business groups. Expansion of Turkey's ties with Russia cause discomfort for the US and the EU, both entities who want Turkey to carry on under their protection alone. In 2002, the AKP got their chance to assume power when the Ecevit government was crushed by a 'civilian coup' for refusing to back American plans to invade Iraq, and trying to strike a balance by improving ties with Russia. Now, President Gul visits Moscow. Could the visit be a new step for the type of 'balanced policies' that were blocked by the US and the West in 2002? If so, everyone in Turkey, except for American supporters, will back it, since Turkey's standing up in one piece depends on such efforts."

Mehmet Yilmaz writes in the Islamist-oriented Zaman: "Obama and his team have begun exchanging ideas with their counterparts around the world, including Joe Biden's meetings at the Munich Security Conference as well as George Mitchell and Richard Holbrooke's visits to their regions. The new US administration aims at using its military and diplomatic powers concurrently with the concept of 'Smart Power,' a term coined by Secretary Clinton. The question is, how do you think the US will act if it cannot persuade its counterparts?"

Editorial Commentary on Turks-Iraqi Kurds Panel in Northern Iraq

Amberin Zaman writes in the leftist Taraf: "On Sunday, an important meeting titled 'Searching Together for Peace and a Future' will be held in Erbil in northern Iraq. This panel meeting, organized by the Abant Platform, is a very important effort because a healthy dialogue will serve the interests of both Turkey and the Kurdish

regional administration in several aspects -- be it Kirkuk, the PKK, or transporting Iraqi oil and gas to the West through Turkey. It will increase Ankara's influence on Baghdad and balance Iran's rising influence in the region. It will also strengthen Turkey's ties with the Obama administration, which has made a goodwill gesture by putting PJAK on the terror list. If press from both sides can manage to report the discussions without any distortion, they'll have strengthened the Turkish government's dialog efforts with northern Iraq, and will have helped draw Turkey and the Iraqi Kurds, two natural allies, closer together."

TV News (CNN Turk)

Domestic

- On February 15, workers affiliated to Turk-Is, DISK and KESK labor unions will rally against the ruling AKP government policies in Kadikoy in Istanbul.
- Applications in Turkish cities for unemployment pay increased by 94.11 percent in January. Applications for new jobs increased by 94.9 percent in the same period.
- International direct investments in Turkey plunged 19.6 percent in 2008.

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- On Saturday, February 14, the Justice Ministry will allow inmates to meet with their relatives on Valentine's Day in prison.

World

- Hamas says a ceasefire with Israel on the Gaza Strip would most likely be announced in the next three days.
- The New York Times reports the International Criminal Court (ICC) would issue an arrest warrant for Sudanese leader al-Bashir for genocide in Darfur. The UN Security Council could put off the ruling for one year since the African Union, the Arab League and China oppose such a sanction on Bashir.
- Pakistan acknowledges for the first time that the November attacks in Mumbai, in which 179 people died, were partly planned in Pakistan.
- A manuscript of an 1864 Abraham Lincoln speech sold Thursday for USD 3.44 million at Christie's in New York City, the highest price paid for an American historical document.

JEFFREY